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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003961

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: SADRISTS TELL CODEL POMEROY "WE ARE BROTHERS"

Classified By: PolCouns Matt Tueller for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: In a December 3 session with Codel Pomeroy, a delegation of Sadrists led by Sheikh Shia al-Faraji solicited U.S. investment in the reconstruction of Sadr City, lambasted the GOI's dependence on Iran, and suggested that the U.S. use the good offices of Grand Ayatollah Sistani to launch talks with Muqtada al-Sadr. End summary.

Sadr City Asks for Help

¶2. (C) Codel Pomeroy (Rep. Earl Pomeroy, D-ND; Rep. Ron Kind, D-WI; Rep. Christopher Shays, R-CT; Rep. Earl Perlmutter, D-CO; and Rep. Brian Baird, D-WA) met December 3 with a Sadrist delegation led by Sheikh Shia Al-Faraji, a religious sheikh and prominent representative of the Office of the Martyr Sadr (OMS) in Sadr City. Al-Faraji was accompanied by Sheikh Hasim al-Saady, Ra'ed Musawi, Atheer al-Musawi, Sheikh Shawkat Rubaie (the imam of the al-Zahra mosque) and Deputy City Councilman Hassan Shamina.

¶3. (C) After welcoming remarks and introductions, Sheikh al-Faraji provided an overview of Sadr City, which he described as a teeming bed of suffering under the former regime. Since Saddam's downfall, al-Faraji continued, "the suffering has changed form, but the people are still suffering." He claimed that the GOI actively discriminated against Sadr City when it came to providing basic services, and noted that since the time of the 2005 elections, not a single GOI minister has ventured into Sadr City to assess its needs. As for Sadr City's reputation for violence, al-Faraji claimed that Sadr City's inhabitants were essentially peaceful, although a few "external forces" had "exploited some incidents" to tarnish the neighborhood's reputation.

¶4. (C) Al-Faraji smoothly transitioned into the Sadrist delegation's key message: in order to take full advantage of the ceasefire ordered by Muqtada al-Sadr, Congress should quickly apportion funds for reconstruction projects in Sadr City. As a secondary request, he expressed interest in pairing Sadr City's sole university with one or more American colleges in order to promote educational exchanges.

Anti-Americanism? Water Under the Bridge

¶5. (C) Rep. Shays asked the Sadrists why, after the U.S. had invested some 1 trillion dollars in Iraq without seeking a drop of Iraqi oil in return, the Sadrists speak so harshly about the U.S. and claim that the U.S. must depart Iraq before relations between America and the Sadrists can improve. Al-Faraji shook his head reprovingly. "With all due respect, that's how we felt previously . . . Now, we call you brothers," he said.

¶6. (C) Why the putative change in the Sadrist attitude towards the U.S.? Because, said al-Faraji, the Sadrists have finally "uncovered the bad intentions of others." "Why do

they want to divide Iraq?" demanded al-Faraji, in an obvious swipe at ISCI. Answering his own question, he continued: "Because their families are abroad, because they don't care what happens to Iraq, and because they just care about their personal interests." Al-Faraji also lambasted senior GOI officials for taking a soft line on Iranian agents found operating in Iraq, hinting that this leniency was a direct result of ISCI's dependency upon Tehran.

How to Launch Talks With Muqtada al-Sadr

¶7. (C) On behalf of Muqtada al-Sadr (MAS), Al-Faraji thanked the Codel and MNF-I for the reduction in military operations in Sadr City over the past two months (although he complained that the drop in Coalition operations has been offset by an increase in raids into Sadr City by the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). He then shared his prescription for launching peace talks between the Sadrist Trend and the USG. The U.S. should, he contended, start by sending a delegation to Grand Ayatollah Sistani and asking him to broker a meeting between an American representative and Muqtada al-Sadr. Sistani would agree, extend the invitation to MAS, who would undoubtedly accept. This would unlock the door to better relations between the USG and the Sadrists.

¶8. (C) Rep. Shays elicited approving nods from the Sadrist delegation when he said that the U.S. did not want to see a divided Iraq. Rep. Kind cautioned that after all the money the U.S. has already invested in Iraq (a sum he estimated at nearly USD 1 trillion), the American public is reluctant to invest more in Iraq unless there is a dramatic improvement in the security situation. Sadr City Deputy Councilman Mr. Hassan Shamina' replied that the residents of Sadr City hoped

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that the U.S. would undertake a new "Marshall Plan" for Sadr City. He noted that there has been a decline in violence recently, which he attributed to Iran's realization that it had erred by siding with AQI. He added: "Al-Qaeda aside, the Shia parties themselves recognize that they're ripping apart their own country."

¶9. (C) Sheikh Shia Faraji expressed his hope that peace will prevail between Iraq and the U.S., and that "we will become close friends and even inter-marry." Picking up on Faraji's statement, Rep. Shays quipped that he had an unmarried 27-year old daughter, at which point one of the Sadrist clerics, Atheer al-Musawi, visibly brightened. "Please reserve her for me!" implored the cleric, adding smugly: "Once she sees me, she'll accept me."

¶10. (U) Codel Pomeroy did not have a chance to clear this message before departing Iraq.
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